

Submission to the Special Committee on Electoral Reform

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Dated: 2016 10 07

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Dear Members of the Special Committee on Electoral Reform,

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1) Aboriginal Members of Parliament Chosen by Aboriginal Voters

I strongly support changing our current system to one using proportional representation (PR).

However, just changing the current voting system leaves one big problem unaddressed – the lack of aboriginal MPs elected by their fellow aboriginal citizens. This is a longstanding wrong that should be addressed now in your process currently underway. I will address PR in the next section of this submission.

Most aboriginal Canadians are spread across the country in small communities or disbursed in urban centres where they are not and never will be a significant enough voting block to have MPs elected to Parliament by fellow aboriginal citizens. This is obviously not the case for English and French speaking citizens, but also for East Asians, Chinese, Italian and other immigrant minorities who live in concentrated neighbourhoods where they predominate. In fact, I believe there are more Sikh than First Nation MPs in the House of Commons.

New Zealand had a similar situation with its Maori population until electoral reform in the 1990's created a separate Maori voters list and a proportional share of seats in Parliament chosen by those Maori electors. The same type of separate aboriginal list could be created during this electoral reform process now underway.

The rest of Canadians would continue to choose their MPs from the general voters list, but aboriginal Canadians could register onto their own separate voters list. Based on the aboriginal population being about 4.5% of the country, approximately 15 seats below the 60th parallel would be represented by aboriginals. I mean no disrespect to aboriginal MPs who have been elected under the current system. It's just that it wasn't a majority of their own people who chose them. This change will not only give aboriginal Canadians representation in Parliament, but under a PR system a real chance to form part of a coalition government.

2) Proportional Representation

In the last election I was very pleased that the Liberals, New Democrats and Greens all supported the notion best expressed by our now Prime Minister that Canada needs a voting system “where every vote counts”. To me that can only mean that your work should lead to the conclusion that Canada needs an election process based on proportional representation to choose our next House of Commons.

Among the over 75 countries now using a proportional system, the Mixed Member Proportional system (MMP) is clearly the most widely used. It is also the simplest to implement because the large majority of MPs would continue to be selected based on the current First-Past-The-Post system. I recommend it be implemented with the following features:

- Create in the four largest provinces regional groupings of seats where at least 70-75% of the MPs are selected, as now, in single member ridings and the remaining MPs (25-30%) are chosen only from the candidates in that region who ran for the party who is allocated one of the PR top-up seats,

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- As an example with a 75%-25% split, these regions would have either 12 or 15 MPs in total and occasionally, like in Northern Ontario, eight seats (6 riding + 2PR seats),
- In the other six smaller provinces the whole province would be the region (See the table below for a suggested split of ridings + PR),
- The three ridings north of the 60th parallel would be unchanged,
- There are three options for the selection of the PR seat representatives in each region or province: 1) a regional/provincial meeting of each party's members would rank their local candidates, 2) the local candidate who came closest to winning would be the party's PR MP for the region, or 3) the local candidate whose gender is underrepresented in his/her party's national total of riding MPs would be chosen again using criteria 1) or 2).

3) Possible Riding Allocation with Aboriginal Seats using 25% PR Seats for the General Population

		25% PR w Abor'l Seats			No Abor'l Seats	
Province	Current Seats	Aboriginal Seats ^{1,2,3}	Riding Seats	Regional PR Seats	Riding Seats	Regional PR Seats
Nfld & Labrador	7	1	4	2	5	2
PEI	4	0	3	1	3	1
Nova Scotia	11	0	8	3	8	3
New Brunswick	10	0	7	3	8	3
Sub-Total: Atlantic	32	1	22	9	24	8
Quebec	78	2	57	19	59	20
Ontario	121	3	89	29	91	30
Manitoba	14	2	9	3	11	4
Saskatchewan	14	2	9	3	11	4
Alberta	34	2	24	8	26	9
British Columbia	42	3	29	10	32	11
Sub-Total: Provinces	335	15	239	81	251	84
Yukon ³	1	0	1	0	1	0
NWT ³	1	0	1	0	1	0
Nunavut ³	1	0	1	0	1	0
Total	338	15	242	81	254	84

NOTES:

1. No 2016 Aboriginal data is available. In 2011 Aboriginals represented 4.3% of Canada's population, which is assumed to be at least 4.5% of the total population in 2016. This represents 15 seats out of the 338 in the current House of Commons.

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Notes to the table (continued)

2. It is difficult to assign an Aboriginal seat in the Atlantic provinces where no one province has enough to qualify, but the region does. It is assigned to Nfld & Labrador which has the highest number of Aboriginals. If the Aboriginal Electors List cannot legally cover all four provinces, then leave out the aboriginal seat in Atlantic Canada.

3. There are no PR or Aboriginal seats allocated for the territories.

4) Conclusion

Your committee has an historic opportunity to not only propose a proportional voting system for Canada that will “make every vote count”, preferably a Mixed Member Proportional system, but to add for the first time in our history First Nation representatives duly elected by their aboriginal peers to our federal Parliament.

I urge this committee to right another historic wrong at the same time it updates our voting system for everyone.

Humbly submitted,

Bruce Budd

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